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ABSTRACT

This report contains comments on the establishment of Italian classes at the secondary level and in colleges, a symposium on the teaching of Italian in New Jersey, college survey reports, teachers and textbooks, the school system and the community, practical and cultural values, and bilingualism as an untapped national resource. The First Annual Symposium report of the Leonardo da Vinci Society includes remarks on the status of Italian in secondary schools, colleges, and universities; bilingualism; vocational opportunities in foreign languages; and Italy's cultural legacy. Letters endorsing the objectives of the organization are included. (RL)

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A REPORT ON THE STUDY OF ITALIAN,

A MODERN LANGUAGE ELECTIVE,

PREPARED BY

THE EDUCATIONAL DEPARTMENT

LEONARDO DA VINCI SOCIETY

FORT LEE, NEW JERSEY

JANUARY, 1963

FL001 943

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Dr. Theodore Heubener, Director, Foreign Languages Board of Education, New York City

Dr. Peter Riccio, Director, Casa Italiana, Columbia University

Dr. Remigo U. Pane, Director, Dept. Romance Languages, Rutgers University

Reverend Edmund P. Kielty, Pastor, Madonna School

Reverend Iappolo, Pastor, St. Nicholas School

Very Rev. Monsignor Stone, Pastor, Holy Trinity School

Mr. Henry Hoebel, Mayor, Fort Lee

Mr. Stagnitti, President, Board of Education, Englewood Cliffs

REPORT: ITALIAN AS A MODERN LANGUAGE ELECTIVE

1. THE LEONARDO DA VINCI SOCIETY: Its purpose and aims.

The Leonardo da Vinci Society is a cultural society, incorporated as an educational society under the statutes of the State of New Jersey. Its main purpose is, through organized educational activities, to increase the awareness and enjoyment of the fruits of culture to all those who would widen the horizons of their intellectual and spiritual lives. Its active members form an excellent cross-section of the American pprofessional and business community. Its membership is open to people of all ethnic origins and is, in fact, so composed.

Awards, available to each high school in Bergen County offering Italian, are being presented to students excelling in the study of the Italian language.

The Society has also established a fund to honor deserving high school or college students with high scholastic attainments.

2. ITALIAN CLASSES ESTABLISHED:

In accordance with its primary function, as well as to probe the degree of demand, the Society offered an eight-week language clinic course based on the audio-visual method. Due to the tremendous success and interest shown, the Society sponsored formal classes in the Italian language on an adult evening basis. The response was overwhelmingly favorable and gratifying.

Instead of the one proposed instructor, two were engaged. Formal classes are held at the Intermediate School on thirty consecutive Tuesdays throughout the academic year. There is an enrollment of one hundred and sixteen students. To keep the classes small for

adequate instruction, forty-two applicants could not be accepted.

The students are adults of diverse national origin, many of whom desire that their children also be given the opportunity for systematic study of Italian in a formal classroom setting.

Communities and social organizations closely associated with Fort Lee have expressed a similar desire.

Mr. Stagnitti, President of the Board of Education of Englewood Cliffs and the Uniti Organization also of Englewood Cliffs, wholly endorse these activities.

3. SYMPOSIUM: TEACHING OF THE ITALIAN LANGUAGE IN NEW JERSEY:

On Saturday, November 17, 1962, a symposium was held on the teaching of the Italian language. Sixty-two schools were invited. At the university level, Rutgers University, Princeton University, Seton Hall University, Fairleigh Dickinson University and St. Peter's College were represented. They were joined at the secondary level by forty-four public and private schools. The total contingency included teachers, Board of Education members, and supervisors of elementary school education. (See review of symposium)

The dramatic success of the symposium (refer to appendix) has encouraged the Society to urge further the introduction of Italian into the High School system. According to Dr. Theodore Huebener, Director of Foreign Languages, Board of Education of the City of New York, Italian occupies a respectable third place among the seven foreign languages offerred in the New York Schools. The present enrollment of 10,000 students has created such an urgent demand that Italian is now being introduced in four elementary schools.

In New Jersey the statistics are equally significant: more

than thirty private and parochial schools throughout the State have introduced the Italian language at an elementary school level.

4. COLLEGE SURVEY REPORTS:

The American Association of Teachers of Italian reports that there was an increase of 25 per cent in 1962 over 1961 in the number of candidates who took the College Entrance Examination Board Achievement Test in Italian.

The Modern Language Association reports that for the same period there was an increase in the number of schools offering Italian and a commensurate rise in the number of students taking Italian.

In Bergen County itself Fairleigh Dickinson University has begun to offer Italian on a college level.

We need not point out that the College Entrance Examination Board accepts the Italian Language by giving it parity with other modern foreign languages.

Colleges do accept Italian as a foreign language prerequisite. A survey conducted by Dr. Cosenza, former Dean of Brooklyn College, shows that as far back as 1922 all major colleges in the United States accepted Italian as meeting the foreign language requirement on a parity with other modern languages.

5. TEACHERS AND TEXTBOOKS:

By virtue of the large Romance Language Department in nearby universities, Rutgers University and Columbia University, as well as other prominent universities, there is now an adequate supply of well-qualified teachers of Italian and textbooks at the secondary school level.

6. THE SCHOOL SYSTEM AND THE COMMUNITY:

There is a principle and tradition in American education which insists that a community may encourage the introduction into the course of study a subject which the community feels will enhance its own cultural and moral values and traditions. Often these values and traditions are necessarily peculiar to the community.

This right of the community to request subjects desired and needed has been and is being exercised by many communities today. Studies concluded by the Modern Language Association reveal that this is the case. Chinese is taught in the Seward Park High School. Norwegian is taught in the Bay Ridge section of Brooklyn. Polish is taught in the Buffalo area. In 1961, East Rutherford High School offered Italian for three years as compared to only two years of French and Spanish.

In the St. Nicholas Parochial School, Italian is being taught at the elementary school level. Many Fort Lee children are enrolled there. These students with a continued elementary training in Italian, by virtue of their qualifications, will be requesting Italian in the Fort Lee High School.

The endorsements of Mr. Stagnitti, President of the Board of Education in Englewood Cliffs, Reverend Edmund P. Kielty, Pastor of the Madonna Parochial School, and Reverend Iappolo, Pastor of the St. Nicholas Parochial School, (all schools feeding students into the Fort Lee High School) clearly indicate that the structure of the student body will be favorable for the insured and continued success of an Italian language program in the High School.

In the metropolitan area alone, there are thirty-six liberal arts colleges, the majority of which offer Italian. In view of

Fort Lee's strategic position at the gateway of Bergen County and New York City, its High School feeds many of its graduates into these colleges. Demands are placed upon metropolitan secondary schools to offer a broader range of subjects. Italian falls into this category.

7. MODERN LANGUAGES TAUGHT FOR THEIR PRACTICAL AND CULTURAL VALUES:

A. It can be pointed out that Italy's present industrial and commercial progress place it in a leading position in the European Common Market. It is the home of more than 250 United States companies with American personnel on hand at all times. This has transformed it from an agarian state to a major industrial power with the highest growth rate of the Six. Tourism into Italy in 1962 has reached the staggering figure of 20 million.

The stream of fashion design industry has settled in Italy. The movie industry has taken residence in the city of Rome with more than 30,000 Americans living there on a year round basis. The large number of American citizens living abroad has created a definite need for trained personnel to staff the Consulate and American Embassy.

B. A modern language stemming from the Latin, Italian serves as an outstanding discipline and as an outstanding preparation, in lieu of Latin, for the study of other Romance Languages and English word derivation. It broadens the appreciation of English and American literature for which it has been a fruitful source of inspiration. It opens up the fields of science, music, art, politics, history, and philosophy, The first twelve hundred years of the study of European civilization remains exclusively

within the Italian Peninsula. The complete cultural values are too well known and too lengthy to enumerate in this report. To quote Dr. Peter Riccio of Columbia University, "No wonder the Anglo-Saxons from Chaucer, Spencer, Shakespeare down to Browning, Wordsworth, Keats, Shelley, and T.S. Eliot have been the greatest lovers and propagandists of its civilization."

8. BI-LINGUALISM, OUR UNTAPPED NATIONAL RESOURCE:

In the light of our world-wide national commitments, we need a multitude of people who not only have a knowledge of a foreign language but also have an understanding of the ways, manners, and customs of other people -- a knowledge and understanding springing from personal intellectual affinity. America has these resources -- we must recognize them and use them.

CONCLUSION:

On a national basis there is an awareness and interest in foreign languages--Italian is one of these languages.

New Jersey shows an increase in the number of schools offering Italian and an increase in the number of students taking Italian. Italian is being introduced in elementary schools.

In Bergen County, the Northern Valley Regional High School will be offering Italian. Fairleigh Dickinson University, Teaneck, in introducing Italian on the college level.

In Fort Lee all leading school officials endorse its introduction. The structure of the student body is favorable for the insured and continued success of an Italian language program in the High School.

The community's needs and requests should be heeded.

THE LEONARDO DA VINCI SOCIETY

Presents
First Annual Symposium
Teaching of the Italian Language
State of New Jersey

Saturday, November 17, 1962
10:00 A.M. to 1:30 P.M.

University Hall - Room #3
Fairleigh Dickinson University
Teaneck, New Jersey

CHAIRMAN: Dr. Anthony F. Le Pera
Assistant Clinical Professor
Seton Hall University, School of Medicine & Dentistry

PROGRAM

10:00 to 10:30 A.M. Registration and Coffee (Cafeteria)

MODERATOR: Dr. Luigi Pollara
Director, Chemical Engineering Department
Stevens Institute of Technology
Hoboken, New Jersey

"Status of Italian in Secondary Schools, Colleges and Universities"
Dr. Remigo U. Pane, Chairman, Dept. Romance Languages
Rutgers State University
New Brunswick, New Jersey

OPEN DISCUSSION

"Bi-Lingualism - Our Untapped National Resource"
Dr. Frank M. Cordasco, Graduate School of Education
Seton Hall University
Orange, New Jersey

OPEN DISCUSSION

"Vocational Opportunities in Foreign Languages"
Dr. Theodore Huebener, Director Foreign Languages
Board of Education, New York City

OPEN DISCUSSION

Film - Italy, Documentary

ADDRESS: "Italy's Cultural Legacy"
Dr. Peter M. Riccio, Director, Casa Italiana
Columbia University
New York City, New York

RESOURCE PERSON: Dr. Leonard Covello, Educational Consultant
Migration Division, Commonwealth of Puerto Rico
Formerly: First Assistant Modern Languages
New York City High Schools

TEACHING OF THE ITALIAN LANGUAGE - SYMPOSIUM REVIEW

The Leonardo da Vinci Society held its first annual symposium concerning the teaching of the Italian Language in the State of New Jersey on Saturday, November 17th, 1962. The program was held at the Teaneck Campus of Fairleigh Dickinson University. Brought together were educators representing St. Peter's College, Princeton, Rutgers, Seton Hall and Fairleigh Dickinson Universities. Representing forty-four secondary public and private schools were teachers, Board of Education members, and supervisors of elementary school education.

In order of appearance were--Dr. Anthony Le Pera, chairman--education, assistant Professor, Seton Hall University. He briefly outlined the purposes and aims of the conference.

Moderator for the symposium was Dr. L. Pollara, Director, Chemical Engineering Department, Stevens Institute of Technology. The opening speaker was Dr. Remigo Pane, Chairman of the Department of the Romance Languages, Rutgers State University. Dr. Pane spoke on the "Status of Italian in Secondary Schools and Colleges and Universities." Dr. Pane presented various and important statistics as to the development of both national and local interest and student enrollment for the study of Italian. Statistics with reference to the study of other modern language offerings in New Jersey's educational system were also presented. Dr. Pane's presentation was followed by a fifteen-minute open discussion by the audience.

The second speaker was Dr. Frank Cordasco of the Graduate School of Education, Seton Hall University. Dr. Cordasco developed the argument "Bi-Lingualism, Our Untapped National Resource." Dr. Cordasco developed this argument negatively bringing to bear the

sociological, and ethnic problems which have come into existence in America these past sixty-two years; problems which have not only existed for the Italian immigrant, but for all foreigners whom Dr. Cordasco classifies as "outsiders looking in," in the status of our American Society. Dr. Cordasco developed his argument fully, and it proved to be most provacative. The subsequent open discussion was made vigorous by the keen intellectual response of serious-minded educators.

Following the second open discussion, the society was honored to have as its next speaker, Dr. Theodore Huebener, Director Foreign Languages of the Board of Education, New York City. The rich administrative experience of Dr. Huebener, coupled with his rich intellectual experience, was sensed immediately in his presentation of the great challenge which lies ahead, and what is being done to meet this challenge in the way of a variety of language programs in the city of New York. Dr. Huebener concluded his talk by discussing the vocational opportunities in foreign languages. Another vigorous brief discussion took place bringing us to the guest speaker of the day, Dr. Peter M. Riccio, Director of Casa Italian, Columbia University. Professor Riccio's topic was "Italy's Cultural Legacy." It was an ideal topic for one of Italian origin with a teaching career which has covered some forty years.

Professor Riccio reached into this rich personal experience and drew very concrete reasons for the importance of studying Italian as a way to enrich our lives, to come to understand ourselves so that we may understand others.

Whether it be the study of the history of the Roman Empire or of Roman Law, whether it be an examination of the manorial system, the

medieval ages, or the renaissance, Italy has been the source and stage for the birth and development of this new philosophical thought, the development of political and natural sciences, and artistic and economic development, all of which live with us today. We cannot help but acknowledge that this development took place under Italian influence, having been conducted first in the Latin language through the thirteenth century and thereafter in the Italian language while, at the same time, being negotiated on the Italian peninsula, itself. Certainly, it was afreed, Italy's contribution has been great, giving the world the well-known genius of Michaelangelo, Galileo, Christopher Columbus and Machiavelli. But yet, it would still be quite easy to name fifty or more other Italians, whose contributions have been no less great; witness the de Medici family, Dante Alleghieri, Marconi or Enrico Fermi.

Following Professor Riccio's talk were additional talks by Leonard Covello, renowned educator in the New York City High School System, and by Professor Angelo Danesino of St. Peter's College. Their summation was that Italy's contribution and ties with Western Civilization, both past and future, are binding in such a way that merits every effort and serious consideration by educators everywhere and on every level to seriously consider incorporating the study of the Italian language into the academic curriculum. Panel speakers, visiting educators, and members unanimously agreed as to the success of the symposium as a medium of fully discussing the challenge and needs of the teaching of the Italian language.

At the meeting great concern was expressed about the desirability and need of having an Italian institute for Italian teachers in the summer of 1963. The society and conference members went on record

with Dr. Hamilton, Director of Division of Language Development, U. S. Office of Education, Washington, D. C., and Dr. Spillane, Chief of Language Institute Section, U. S. Office of Education, Washington, D. C., as wholly supporting an Institute in Italian for the summer of 1963.

BOARD OF EDUCATION OF THE CITY OF NEW YORK
110 Livingston Street, Brooklyn 1, N.Y.
Office of the Superintendent of Schools

December 4, 1962

Dear Dr. Le Pera:

It was a privilege for me to contribute in a modest way to your program which, I felt, offered something to everybody.

In the New York schools where we now offer seven languages, Italian occupies third place, enrolling almost 10,000 students.

In view of our close relations with Italy and the large numbers of Italo-Americans in our metropolitan areas, a knowledge of Italian is a vocational as well as a cultural asset.

Furthermore, the study of the language has a real sociological value for our children of Italian derivation since it strengthens their family ties and gives them an appreciation of the culture of their parents.

We are introducing it here into four elementary schools.

Sincerely yours,

Theodore Huebener
Director of Foreign Languages
Board of Education of the City of N.Y.

COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY
Casa Italian
117th Street and Amsterdam Avenue
New York 27, N.Y.

November 30, 1962

Dear Dr. LePera:

Thank you for your kind and gracious letter about the recent symposium on the study of the Italian language and litereature which you so successfully helped to organize. The large attendance and representation from the various educational institutions reflect the efficient efforts of your enterprising co-workers.

Frankly, I think your Da Vinci Society is on the right track. Your committee seems to have the courage of its convictions. The power of persevering with a good program is bound to produce beneficial results -- and sometimes they acquire the scope far beyond your original objectives. That's how the Casa campaign started and that's how we are now enjoying the fruits of our early labors in a manner far beyond our fondest of dreams.

I am pleased that your group stresses the universal, humanistic aspects in the area of Italian studies -- that it can prepare one for a richer and more enjoyable life in this wonderful land of ours, that it can transcend ethnic, socioeconomic, political, linguistic, literary and other considerations making for a citizenry endowed with a sharper and more extensive perspective on basic human values and on the poetry of living. No wonder the Anglo-Saxons from Chaucer, Spenser, Shakespeare down to Browing, Wordsworth, Keats, Shelley and T. S. Eliot have been the greatest lovers and propagandists of Italy and its civilization. No wonder Bryon wrote "Italy, Mother of arts thy hand was once our guardian and is still our guide." Need I say more?

Thank you for the pleasure and privilege of being invited to meet and address your lively and very promising Leonardo group.

Sincerely,

Peter M. Riccio
Director, Casa Italiana
Columbia University

DEPARTMENT OF ROMANCE LANGUAGES
Rutgers State University
New Brunswick, New Jersey

December 23, 1962

Dear Dr. Le Pera:

My busy university schedule has prevented my writing you sooner to congratulate you on the excellent program the Leonardo da Vinci Society arranged on November 17th.

It was very inspiring to see so many devoted persons working for the cause of Italian culture in the United States.

The messages of Drs. Riccio, Covello and Huebener were particularly effective since they have done a great deal to encourage the teaching of Italian.

I am happy that your group is trying to awaken interest in the teaching of Italian and, more important, in its study. We all must start a group movement to convince Italian and non-Italian parents and school and university students that the study of Italian is as rewarding as the study of any other language, and from the cultural point of view, more so than many others.

One of the problems (the most serious) is the lack of well qualified teachers. Usually a teacher of another language with an Italian name is asked to teach a class and in many cases the person is not competent in the subject and the Italian class suffers and eventually dies out.

We at Rutgers are trying to encourage our students to become teachers and are preparing many.

It would help us immensely if groups such as yours would establish annual prizes ($50 - $100 or more) to give to outstanding students.

Cordial regards to all the good people I met at the Symposium.

Sincerely yours,

Remigo U. Pane
Dept. Romance Languages
Rutgers State University

MADONNA RECTORY
601 Church Lane
Fort Lee, N. J.

February 4, 1963

Dear Doctor Le Pera,

I have followed with interest the accounts in the local press of your society's adult education classes in Italian. I was of a mind to enroll myself but feared the burden of parish business would leave my attendance record something less than admirable.

Your program to bring Italian into the High School curriculum of Fort Lee would certainly help to fill a need in the community. Each year the world shrinks smaller, and the knowledge of a second language is almost a necessity for one who would succeed in business, or pursue higher studies, or even just enjoy foreign travel.

Here at Madonna we have a very high percentage of pupils of Italian descent. I feel sure the majority of them would take Italian courses in High School, if they were available.

With best wishes for success in your program I am,

Sincerely yours,

Edmund P. Kielty
Pastor

OBLATES OF MARY IMMACULATE
ST. NICHOLAS RECTORY
Palisades Park, New Jersey

February 11, 1963

Educational Department
Leonardo da Vinci Society
Fort Lee, New Jersey

Dear Dr. Le Pera:

I sincerely do believe that your noble endeavors for the integration of the Italian language into the High School program of this area deserve our unconditional commendation and moral support.

Being born in a polyglot country as Europe, I can easily appreciate the many advantages of the linguistic unity which binds together the people of this vast Continent from coast to coast. But no matter what we may think of the original division of Tongues, historically pluralism is a fact...and the human implications of such a fact are of paramount importance.

The Romans did not abolish the linguistic differences of the various peoples to whom they taught the Roman way of living; and the study of Languages was for them an integral part of the so-called Humanities. There is no full understanding of other peoples however integrated except through the knowledge of the language they originally spoke.

Wholeheartedly I wish you success. With all my personal regards, I remain,

Very truly yours,

A. Joppolo O.M.I.
Pastor

HOLY TRINITY RECTORY

2367 Lemoine Avenue
"Coytesville"
Fort Lee, N. J.

February 11, 1963

Educational Department
Leonardo da Vinci Society
Fort Lee, New Jersey

Dear Dr. Le Pera:

I am very pleased to hear of the efforts of the Leonardo da Vinci Society to make available a continual program of education in the Italian language. I approve most highly the suggestion that a course in Italian be offered in the Fort Lee High School, and Father Geiger and Father McHugh share my interest and approval.

I have personally studied Italian in college, but I am convinced that the training would be more beneficial on the high-school level.

Moreover, since many families, both in Coytesville and Englewood Cliffs, reflect some Italian ancestry, the availability of such a course would give them added opportunity to maintain a link with their Italian culture.

I also commend the Adult Education Program in the Italian language that has been offered this past year, and I anticipate its continued existence. A program on the High-School level would also make the Adult Program more beneficial.

Sincerely in Christ,

Very Rev. Msgr. James A. Stone

BOROUGH OF FORT LEE
BERGEN COUNTY, N.J.

February 6, 1963

Dear Dr. Le Pera:

I have followed the progress of the Leonardo da Vinci Society in Fort Lee with great interest, and feel compelled to express some views regarding your work.

The cultural diversity of America is one of the reasons our country has become great. It is incumbent upon us all to pass on to the next generations those mores which have enriched our lives. The contribution of Italian scholars and artists has been a major force in the development of our civilization and the study and appreciation of this cultural endeavor must be carried on.

Your Italian language program is also to be commended. Our world is growing smaller and it is becoming more important that knowledge of more than one language be stressed. It is through efforts such as yours that we may someday enjoy a better understanding among different national groups, thereby promoting world peace.

Please accept my best wishes for continued success.

Very truly yours,

Henry L. Hoebel
Mayor

BOARD OF EDUCATION
BOROUGH OF ENGLEWOOD CLIFFS
BERGEN COUNTY, NEW JERSEY

February 4, 1963

Leonardo da Vinci Society
Fort Lee
New Jersey

Gentlemen:

I have learned with pleasure that your Society is presently taking steps towards the introduction of Italian as one of the foreign languages to be taught in the Fort Lee High School.

This fine movement, in my opinion, has been long in coming, and I sincerely respect and encourage your positive stand.

Considering the richness of the Italian language and the richness of the customs of its people, I have no doubt that, Fort Lee being an educational minded and forward looking community, will warmly accept your recommendations and eventually cause the implementation of your suggestion.

If I can be of any assistance in connection with the advancement of this program, please do not hesitate to call upon me.

With my kindest personal regards and my hope that this venture be brought to a successful conclusion, I remain

Sincerely yours,

Thomas E. Stagnitti
President of The Englewood
Cliffs Board of Education